

FOLLY TREE ARBORETUM PROGRAM REPORT

#### **MISSION**



The Folly Tree Arboretum is a cultural archive of trees dedicated to ecological storytelling. Founded in 2013, Folly Tree works to promote an exuberant environmental ethic through art and science, a concept that considers the value of life and the relationship between humans and the environment.

We are committed to supporting new methods of environmental storytelling. The arboretum functions as a site of conceptual investigation and research for artists and scientists, providing an artist residency, grant program, site-specific events and exhibitions, and ecological tours in the spring through fall.

## **HISTORY**

The Folly Tree Arboretum was founded in 2013 by Tucker Marder, an artist with a Masters degree in Contextual Practice from Carnegie Mellon University. Coming from a family of horticulturalists, he utilized his love of dendrology to expand the role of art in the public sphere and engage with new contexts and communities.

Folly Tree exists within a twelve acre property, with six acres dedicated to the arboretum inhabited by a collection of over 200 tree varieties.



## **IMPACT**





The Folly Tree Arboretum has served over 7,200 individuals and families through tours, events, exhibitions, and workshops. We have hosted 13 artists and scientists in our residency program, provided grants to 3 artists for existing works, created 10 events, presented 2 exhibitions, and created 4 landscape installations.

## **PROGRAMS**

**Dancing Tree Award** 

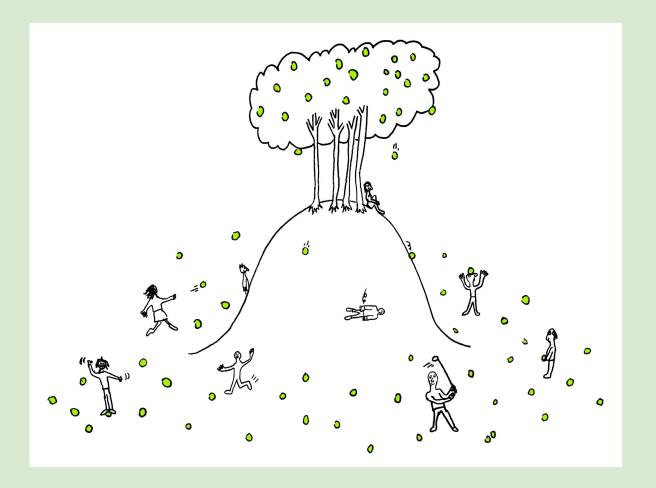
**Arboretum Tree Collection** 

**Artist Residency** 

**Exhibitions and Events** 

**Landscape Installations** 

**Youth Program** 



Since 2023, The Folly Tree Arboretum has awarded \$2,000 annually to an existing finished work or project that embodies a novel strategy for communicating environmental awareness.

We are devoted to the idea that compelling storytelling is an essential component of lasting environmental change. Communicating the scale, immediacy, impact, and paths of action regarding ecological crisis is one of the most pressing issues of our time. This award aims to promote new voices and novel ways of cultural production that are optimistic in approach and run counter to prevailing trends of nihilism and inaction. We support projects that articulate the complexity of our relationship to the natural world in ways that are hopeful, inspiring, humorous, risky, exciting, wacky, provocative, weird, experimental, playful, irreverent, or unexpectedly effective. The Dancing Tree Award acknowledges work that demonstrates an exuberant way forward in the face of seemingly impossible ecological challenges.







Ollie Goss's "Goose Song" is a captivating spectacle reminiscent of an amusement park, with its own set of rules and regulations. Video, projection and a diy carnival ride bring viewers to questions of water rights and collectivity. It is fabled that certain swans sing a haunting song before their death after not making a sound their entire lives. We are not the swan, silent for their whole life until the end, but the goose, screaming and yelling, doing all we can, and wailing until our last breath.





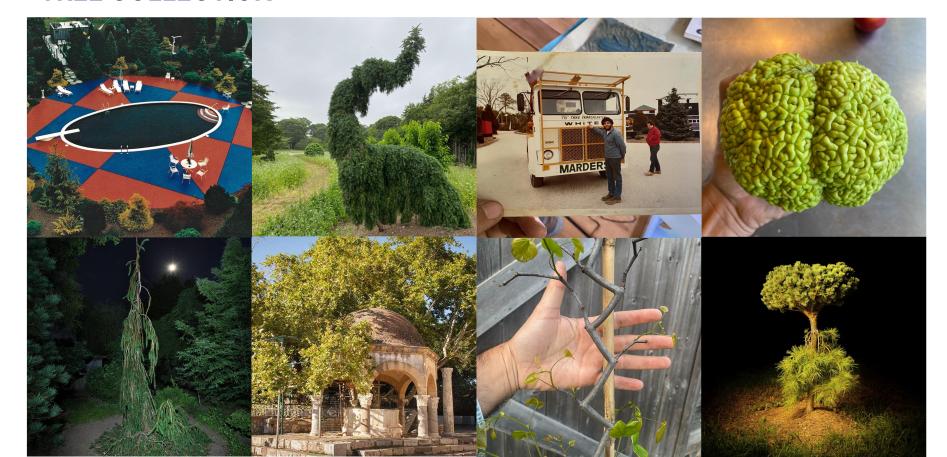
Jude Gabriel's "Next World Emissaries" marks a shift into new sculptural territory that builds on previous work that explored eco-anxiety in fantastic and dystopic tableaux. These new works award humanity's current "pests" a monumental scale. The sculptures explore the concept of ecological resilience influenced by speculative fiction in historical and contemporary writing, visual art and popular culture.



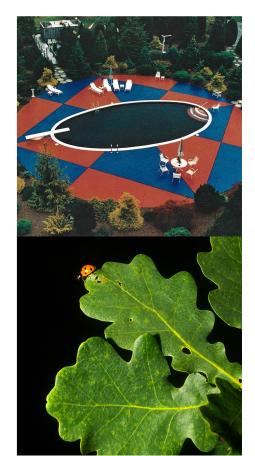
Cristina Salas's "Muñeca Gardens" are an ongoing series of large scale pollinator gardens made from crocheted recycled fabric and natural fibers often in the shape of mythological female figures.



# FOLLY TREE ARBORETUM TREE COLLECTION



# **FOLLY TREE ARBORETUM Tree Stories in our Collection**



Japanese Umbrella Pine 'Ossorio's Gold' Sciadopitys verticillata

Ossorio's Gold is named after Alfonso A. Ossorio, Filipino American abstract expressionist artist, born in Manila in 1916. In the 1970s, he built one of the world's largest collections of conifers at his estate and sculpture garden known as "The Creeks," in East Hampton, NY. The American Horticultural Society called The Creeks "the eighth wonder of the horticultural world." The Creeks was one of Kathleen and Charlie Marder's first landscaping jobs. One day Charlie stumbled upon a bright yellow Japanese Umbrella Pine in a nursery field that would not turn green, but instead stayed a beautiful golden yellow color all year round. They gifted the tree to Mr. Ossorio and sent cuttings to Oregon to be propagated and become a new cultivar. The Creeks has been lost to time, but Ossorio's Gold was recently recovered and acquired by Folly Tree.

Jesse Owens Olympic Oak Quercus robur

A European White Oak that was gifted to Jesse Owens by the German Olympic Committee in recognition of his four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.



Osage Orange 'Cannon Ball' Maclura pomifera

With inedible fruit that approaches the size of a cannonball, we grow this tree for the very reasons it is not useful. The Osage Orange leads a subversive and disruptive existence which makes is an incredible agent of play and tool for imaginative storytelling.

## **EVENTS - Bread and Puppet Theatre**





The Bread and Puppet Theater celebrated their 60th anniversary with The Heart of the Matter Circus! Founded in 1964 on New York City's Lower East Side, Bread and Puppet continues to be one of the oldest, nonprofit, political theatre companies in the country. The name Bread & Puppet is derived from the theater's practice of sharing its own fresh bread, served for free with aïoli, with the audience of each performance to create community, and from its central principle: art should be as basic and accessible as bread to life.





Folly Tree produced a site-specific work between artist Aron Sanchez-Baranda (WATERBOD) and musician LEYLA which included video projection and live harp, electric violin, and voice to explore sensory abstraction and unconscious response to natural forms. The work highlights anemones, snails and sea cucumbers to document the declining wildlife and fungi found on the California coast. Sanches-Baranda's recent solo exhibition, Membrana, was shown at the Venice Biennale in Italy.

## **EVENTS - PONCILI CREACIÓN**







PONCILI CREACIÓN is an experimental art collective from Puerto Rico, led by twin brothers Pablo and Efrain Del Hierro. They create surreal performances using large-scale puppets and sculptures crafted from repurposed materials. Known for their bold and improvisational style, Poncili Creación often performs in public spaces, blending puppetry, live music, and storytelling to challenge conventional theater boundaries. Their performance at Folly Tree embodied a mix of playfulness, environmental investigation, and philosophical depth.

#### ARTIST RESIDENCY

The Folly Tree Arboretum supports creative thinkers who are developing novel forms of environmental storytelling. Every summer, the arboretum hosts a group of artists in residence for a period of two to six weeks. They live in a seven bedroom house on the property, are provided meals, project, and research support.

The residency has hosted a broad spectrum of practices, from artist-scientist Dr. Suzanne Pierre, to sound-artist -researcher Ivana Dama, to National Association of Science Writers Award winner Zoe Schlanger.

The residency provides flexibility which allows for artists to dictate their time to experiment, finish a project, or start something new. The residency is family friendly and every summer we host a bbq so the community can engage with the artists.





















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#### **ARTIST RESIDENCY**

## From 2021-2024 our Folly Tree's A.I.R program has hosted 13 artists

## 2024

Lee Pivnik Naoco Wowsugi Alice Yuan Zhang

#### 2023

TJ Shin terra0 Dr. Suzanne Pierre

#### 2022

Ivana Dama Adjua Greaves Zoë Schlanger Jeremy Kamal Hartley & Hannah Gaengler

#### 2021

Ezra Wube Mae Ling Lokko Amy Youngs







#### **Artist Bio Highlight\***

Dr. Suzanne Pierre received a Doctor of Philosophy in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University and an interdisciplinary Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies from New York University. She also completed a University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellowship at UC Berkeley.

Alice Yuan Zhang is a media artist and cultural organizer who tells stories to weave the bitsphere and biosphere. She dreams of a relational web with phone lines to interspecies neighbors, tools for time travel, and space for playful ancestors to rehearse mycelial strategies of care.

Lee Pivnik is an artist living in Miami, Florida. Working across disciplines, he takes inspiration from living systems and other species to imagine a future based on mutualistic relationships instead of extractive economies. Lee is a 2025 Creative Capital artist.

## **EXHIBITIONS**



Emma Soucek



Brittni Ann Harvey



Noel de Lesseps

<u>Safe Gallery</u> presents at <u>Folly Tree Arboretum</u>, curated by Blair Blumberg and Jonny Campolo, 2019, New York

The Folly Tree Arboretum has presented two exhibitions with guest curators and plans to continue to engage artists through exhibitions in the future.





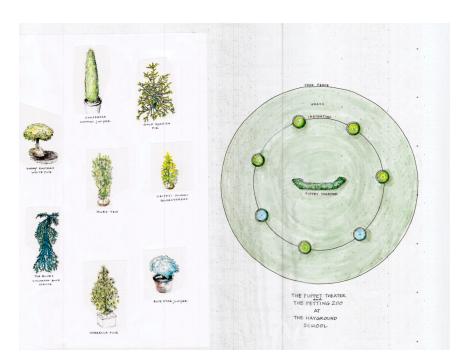
#### LANDSCAPE INSTALLATIONS





Folly Tree has produced a number of landscape installations from Osage Orange Cannonball Hill, to one of Cristina Salas's "Muñeca Gardens" at the arboretum. We have also created a Conifer petting zoo and puppet theater at Hayground Elementary School. The images above are early installations of projects that become evolving and lasting sites for play and storytelling.

### LANDSCAPE INSTALLATIONS





Folly Tree created a conifer petting zoo and puppet theater at Hayground Elementary School. Trees are essential to our environment, and help to reduce stress and anxiety. Trees provide a rich sensory experience and are a great resource in education and development. Our installations foster creative and critical thinking by connecting students to nature.

## **SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM - Storytelling Workshop**



The Folly Tree Arboretum Storytelling Workshop is a project-based outdoor arts, performance, and filmmaking camp for kids ages 8 – 12 and takes place over two weeks.

The Workshop guides kids to explore their own creativity through play, making, and discovering relationships between ecology and the arts. The hands-on collaborative workshops will include improv games; storytelling exercises; narrative and abstract puppetry; mask, costume, and prop play; and include learning about the natural sciences throughout. In 2025, the workshop will focus specifically on storytelling and performing for camera, filmmaking, and the cinematic arts. The 9 day workshop culminates with a screening of the film project attendees have worked together to create at Sag Harbor Cinema!

#### ON THE HORIZON

**BOOK** - A catalog of the trees at the Folly Tree Arboretum, featuring essays and artist projects that explore each tree's origin story, cultural significance, and historical context. Featuring a broad cross section of writers, from Bob Finchem, known conifer authority, to Martine Syms conceptual artist, the forthcoming catalog will be published by the fabled Chronicle Books.

#### LANDSCAPE INSTALLATIONS + EXHIBITIONS

**EXPANDED GRANTS** - In the coming years Folly Tree intends to expand its grant program to produce works and extend the non-profit's footprint outside of the arboretum through the support of environmental films, video art, and new projects.

**EXPANDED TOURS** - If funding is secured Folly Tree will offer free tour days throughout the upcoming seasons.





#### **Founder and Executive Director**

Tucker Marder is an artist and the founder of the Folly Tree Arboretum. His work has been exhibited at institutions including the National Aviary, Phipps Botanical Garden, and Storefront for Art and Architecture. Marder holds an MFA in Social Practice from Carnegie Mellon University (2016) and has served as an artist-in-residence at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and SymbioticA at the University of Western Australia. Both Marder and the Folly Tree Arboretum were featured in *The New York Times* article "The Strangest Trees Grow in East Hampton."



## **Co-programmer/ Storytelling Workshop Director**

Isla Hansen is an artist and Professor of Sculpture at the School of Art at Carnegie Mellon University. Isla's work in sculpture, installation, performance, and video has been exhibited at Guild Hall, the Mattress Factory Museum, the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, the Hammer Museum, Akron Art Museum, Columbus Museum of Art and MOCA Cleveland. Isla has been the recipient of the Rauschenberg Foundation Artist in Residence and a Heinz Endowments Creative Development Award. Isla holds a BA from Columbia University and an MFA from Carnegie Mellon University.



#### **Residency Director**

Ellie Duke is a writer, editor, and creative producer from Vermont who lives in Springs, NY. She has worked as an editor for the Los Angeles Review of Books and Hyperallergic, and has written for various arts and culture magazines such as the New York Times, the Surfer's Journal, and Art in America. She received a master's in Religion and Public Life from Harvard Divinity School and a bachelor's in Literary Arts from Brown University.

## **BOARD**

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Tucker Marder Member Founder and Director of The Folly Tree Arboretum



#### Thank you!

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